

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PN
SUBJECT: CONVENTION TIME IN PANAMA

SUMMARY: ON JANUARY 8, EXILED FORMER PRESIDENT ARNULFO ARIAS' PANAMENISTA PARTY HELD ITS FIRST CONVENTION IN OVER NINE YEARS. ESTIMATES OF ATTENDANCE VARY WIDELY, RANGING UP TO 13,000. A NEW LEADERSHIP WAS ELECTED AND A DOCUMENT RELEASED, THE "SANTIAGO PROCLAMATION." REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES AND GROUPS ATTENDED. END SUMMARY.

1. UNSUCCESSFUL IN ITS ATTEMPTS TO HOLD A CONVENTION IN DECEMBER, DUE TO PROBLEMS IN LINING UP A MEETING PLACE, THE PANAMENISTA PARTY HELD ITS FIRST CONVENTION IN OVER NINE YEARS IN SANTIAGO, CAPITAL OF VERAGUAS PROVINCE AND THE HOME TOWN OF GEN. TORRIJOS. OPTIMISTS IN THE PARTY HAD PREDICTED ATTENDANCE OF UP TO 3,000, BUT ACTUAL ATTENDANCE WAS MUCH GREATER. ESTIMATES VARY WIDELY, RANGING UP TO 13,000, BUT 8-10,000 IS PROBABLY NOT AN UNREALISTIC FIGURE. THE DAY-LONG MEETING CAME OFF PEACEFULLY, ALTHOUGH AN ANTI-CONVENTION DEMONSTRATION TOOK PLACE IN SANTIAGO THE PREVIOUS DAY, AND SOME POSTERS SHOWED UP AT THE CONVENTION, LINKING EXILED PARTY PRESIDENT ARNULFO ARIAS TO THE

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CIA AND TO FASCISM.

2. DURING THE CONVENTION, A MESSAGE WAS READ FROM ARIAS, WHO RESIDES IN MIAMI, AND LEADERS OF OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES AND GROUPS SPOKE (FROM THE REPUBLICAN, LIBERAL, AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES, AND FROM THE INDEPENDENT LAWYERS MOVEMENT, THE WOMEN'S PATRIOTIC UNION, AND LESSER

GROUPS). THE CONVENTION ISSUED A 1,000-WORD DOCUMENT, THE "SANTIAGO PROCLAMATION," WHICH DISCUSSED INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND BASIC CONDITIONS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF A FULLY DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM, AND CALLED FOR A DEMOCRATIC REGIME WHEREIN THE OPPOSITION IS NOT SUBJECTED TO EXILE. IT CAST FULL BLAME FOR THE COUNTRY'S CURRENT ILLS ON THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

3. THE FOLLOWING WERE ELECTED, UPON THE REQUEST OF ARIAS, AS THE PARTY LEADERSHIP: AS SECRETARY GENERAL, JORGE PACIFICO ADAMES; AND AS DIRECTORS: LUIS F. CLEMENT, JUAN CHEVALIER, GUILLERMO ENDARA, JOSE SALVADOR MUÑOZ, NAPOLEON SALAZAR, DEMOSTENES VEGA MENDEZ, DAVID ARCE, MIGUEL BATISTA, CARLOS COLCO, HECTOR PENALBA, EMILIO ROYO LINARES, CARLOS SALAZAR, AND PASCUAL URENA.

4. COMMENT: THE FACT THAT A POLITICAL CONVENTION TOOK PLACE AT ALL IS NOTEWORTHY, EVEN WITH THE CURRENT "VERANILLO" (INDIAN SUMMER) OF DEMOCRACY. THE FACT THAT, WITH LITTLE PRIOR PUBLICITY, THE PARTY DREW SUCH A LARGE CROWD WAS SURPRISING EVEN TO THE PANAMENISTAS. ALTHOUGH IT MAY NOT BE A DIRECT INDICATOR OF THE PARTY'S POPULARITY IN THE COUNTRY, IT IS AT LEAST AN INDICATOR OF SUBSTANTIAL INTEREST IN POLITICAL PARTIES AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN GENERAL.

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